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THINKING BEYOND NATO

Issue Paper submitted

by

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## I. SUMMARY

The US has always supported the development of a distinct European security identity. However, since the end of WWII, European initiatives to achieve this goal brought only mixed success. NATO dominates the European security environment and is dominated by US leadership. With a diminishing Soviet threat, German unification, the emergence of the European Community (EC) in 1992 and the turmoil in Eastern European countries, the security environment may now provide the opportunity for the Europeans to assume greater leadership. What should be the US position when it come to the efforts to develop European security structures outside of and perhaps in place of NATO? To ascertain the US position requires an examination of the potential US post cold War strategy, the so-called "European Pillar", and the changing European security environment.

## II. ISSUE DEFINITION

With regard to efforts to develop European security structures outside of and perhaps in place of NATO, what should the US position be? The changing global and European security environment, a diminishing Soviet threat and the demands of competing domestic issues at home make this a significant issue in US global strategy.

### III. BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

#### INTRODUCTION

In the days of Greece and Rome, it was Pericles who provided the strategic thinking that guided the nation-state Athens in defending itself against the warrior-state Sparta and determining the alliances it would form. In more recent times (after WWII), it was George Kennan, an American Pericles, who provided the strategic thinking resulting in the strategy of "containment" and the subsequent formation of alliances against an expansionist Soviet Union. Our grand Atlantic Alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a result of that strategic thinking.

In the aftermath of sweeping changes in Central Europe, Eastern Europe and a Soviet Union crumbling before our eyes, we are confronted by a strategic landscape transformed. The national security strategy map that guided us through the Cold War seems inadequate as we approach the badlands that lie ahead. Old enemies appear now as friends, old allies present not only promise but peril and the stark reality of finite means, even for a superpower like America, intrudes. Finding our way through this national security strategy terrain is not only an exercise in managing the apparently contradictory forces of continuity and change, but also making strategic "common sense" out of power and purpose, out of ends and means, while somehow preserving our identity as a great nation.

The legitimacy of our grand Alliance, NATO, the centerpiece of our global strategy of containment is challenged. Should it be preserved? Should it be replaced? Does the success of NATO represent what Clausewitz called the "culminating point of victory"? Does American fatigue now give way to European aspiration? Should the Soviet Union no longer be considered a threat? Or is it really more like Kissinger said,

An empire assembled over a period of 400 years by force will not disintegrate passively. And the Western Alliance is bound to be shaken by the very events it is celebrating.

In the absence of a post Cold War Pericles, I submit that many of the answers lie in a strategic calculus consisting not only of absolutes but also of approximations. As James H. Billington suggested, "We ought to be seeking tentative answers to fundamental questions, rather than definitive answers to trivial ones."

Against this backdrop, this paper suggests some tentative answers to the fundamental questions underlying development of a

European security structure outside of and perhaps in place of NATO. It examines a potential US post Cold War strategy, the development of the "European Pillar" and the changing European security environment.

## US STRATEGY

NATO is an outgrowth of the grand strategy of containment. George Kennan, the father of containment, coined the term in July 1947 when he called for a "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansionist tendencies." Geopolitically situated along the main axis of confrontation with the Soviet Union, NATO was the centerpiece of our strategy during the Cold War. As the Soviet Union diminishes as a threat, the continuing validity of NATO and therefore the strategy that called it into existence come into question. What US strategy does NATO in the post Cold War era now serve? What is the grand strategy for President Bush's "new world order"? It is instructive to examine Kennan's strategic concept of containment in its original form. The premises of the concept were

- maintaining balances of power in various regions of the world
- acknowledgement of "vital" world power centers
- US is strong, but we do not have inexhaustible resources
- concept of "strongpoint" defenses along a MacKinder rimland
- US seeks not so much to control these centers, but deny control to hostile powers
- US goals achieved through economic means and skillful diplomacy, but military means is not ruled out
- economic rehabilitation of Japan and Germany were central
- Soviet Russia was an aggressive and expansionist power

In its purest form, Kennan's strategic appears to be a brilliant 20th century formulation of Sun Tzu's axiom, "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill". Or as Kennan said,

I would rather wait thirty years for a defeat of the Kremlin brought about by the tortuous and exasperating slow devices of diplomacy than to see us submit to a test of arms differences so little susceptible to any clear and happy settlement by these means.

Consistent with Clausewitz's dictum that "... every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions and its own peculiar preconceptions" and therefore its own peculiar strategy. Kennan's formulation of Sun Tzu's axiom was appropriate to his age.

In the post-Cold War era, a modified strategy of containment should be possible. The United States would be a facilitator of economic development with U.S. presence in critical regions of

the world, and together with the "vital" power centers of Japan and the E.C. could bring about stability, prosperity, and democratization in the globe. The essential premise of this concept might be --

- Update Kennan's vital centers of power (US, Japan, EC, and the USSR)
- US strategy does not have open ended resources
- The idea of economic "strongpoints" would be valid
- Military force last resort, "peace if possible insofar as it affects our interests"
- Russia is no longer the unifying threat
- US goal would be to insure that no hostile power dominates these power centers (roughly equating to world's regions)

This would require highly mobile military power, economic and psychological power, establishment of regional balances of power and skillful diplomacy. It will also require the critical ability of our national decision makers to ascertain the truly "vital interests" of America. Our ability in the post-Cold War era to use finesse as well as power, "to subdue the enemy without fighting" will require statesmen with grand strategic vision. As Kennan said, "Our ability to avoid the abundant pitfalls of attempting to strike noble poses with regard to a situation one did not create, cannot remove, and understands very poorly" must be an integral feature of our strategy in the 90's.

This might provide a tentative answer to a grand strategy for providing a rationale for the continuance of a restructured NATO. However, regional factors must be brought into our overall calculus to determine whether a European security structure could or should replace NATO. One thing is certain, although the Soviet threat has diminished, the requirement for NATO or a similar security arrangement remains. As Samuel P. Huntington said:

Gorbachev may be able to discard Communism, but he cannot discard geography and the geopolitical imperatives that have shaped Russian behaviour for centuries.

#### THE EUROPEAN PILLAR

Throughout the Cold War era, the United States supported the concept of a European pillar to the Atlantic alliance. The strategic thought from which the alliance emerged contained this idea. In 1947, George Kennan's strategic concept of containment aimed at the emergence over the long term of independent centers of power in Europe and Asia. He told students at the National War College that we need "to make it possible for all the European countries to lead again an independent national existence without fear of being crushed by their neighbor to the

east." In 1948, he went on to say:

Our present policy is directed . . . toward the eventual, peaceful withdrawal of both the United States and the USSR from Europe, and accordingly toward the growth of a third force which can absorb and take over the territory between the two.

On the Fourth of July, 1962, John Kennedy coined the term "European pillar" to describe the idea that Europe would one day become an equal partner in the Alliance. In 1952, General Dwight D. Eisenhower said that NATO would be a failure if American units remained in Europe for more than ten years. Today in 1991 the debate over how to create a European pillar continues.

The problems are many -- European security policy formation, nuclear weapons, cooperation on weapons production, consensus on security issues and a host of others. Although the EC promises economic and political union of participating European countries in 1992, the fundamental problem resides in the lack of a common security identity. This, of course, rests upon a shared political identity. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, said almost prophetically:

Unless NATO becomes far more than a purely military alliance, it will be at the mercy of the first plausible Soviet peace offensive.

Over the years our European allies have developed several groups and initiatives to bring greater unity to defense policy and European security issues. Some of these are: the Western European Union (WEU), the European Political Cooperation (EPC), and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Although the WEU was initially set up to monitor German rearmament after the formation of NATO, it fell into relative disuse in the 1970's. In 1981 it was revitalized by the French when French foreign minister Charles Chayssons said, "to discuss strategy . . . since Europeans want to talk about security, the WEU must be reawakened." From 1984 on the foreign and defense ministers of the WEU countries, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and the UK, meet biannually in Rome to discuss foreign policy and security issues.

I submit that the framework for the development of a European security identity already exists. The basic elements of the framework appear to be the EC, the WEU, the EPC, and the CSCE process. With the establishment of the EC in 1992, the possibility of joining the EC's European Political Cooperation

mechanism with the WEU presents the potential for establishing under the EC not only political unification but security policy unity. The evolution of this structure "EC-EPC-WEU" might provide the best future possibility for establishing a definitive European security identity. The problems of security policy formation, cooperation on weapons development and production, and issues of nuclear weapons could be addressed in coordinated forums.

Although the US has consistently supported the development of a European pillar, the fundamental question that must be addressed is whether the US is politically and perhaps even psychologically mature to actively promote an institutionalized European defense cooperation. Is the United States ready to share leadership with an "equal" partner and therefore to subject previous US policies in Europe to the constraints of that partnership? Ultimately this will elicit a familiar response that if Europe wants to share leadership then it should also share greater risk and responsibility (burden sharing). Considering our domestic economic situation, there should be significant support for this attitude.

I believe that it is in our long range interests to support and promote the development of greater European defense cooperation and to foster the growth of a distinct European security identity, the "third force" that Kennan talked about in his strategy of containment. This tentative answer presents a significant challenge to American diplomacy, it demands a long range perspective in our foreign policy, and a realistic appraisal of our finite resources.

#### CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Key to understanding a potential US strategy in post-Cold War era and the need for a European security identity in Western Europe is the changing security environment.

With German unification, Germany will become an equal diplomatic and economic partner to the United States in Western Europe. That relationship has been built upon consistent US political, economic and military assistance, and has been highlighted by events such as the economic aid in the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift, and critical US support for German unification. With the development of the EC and its potential evolution into some form of a federated Europe, Germany will play an increasingly vital role. By virtue of its size, its economic power, and its geostrategic position on the European continent, it can only grow in importance. A healthy and vibrant US-German relationship is pivotal to future US collaboration within the broader framework of US-European relations.



Although the threat posed by the Soviet Union has appeared to recede, it remains a military and nuclear superpower, and must carry commensurate weight in both US and European calculations. The only country which can provide a nuclear counterweight to the USSR is the US. Although the British and French are both regional nuclear powers, the nuclear capability of both combined could not provide the nuclear umbrella for Europe much less provide the basis for a new European security policy. Furthermore, from a political standpoint these forces serve their individual national interests that neither France nor England seem ready to sacrifice to a federated Western Europe. A recent lecturer at the National War College asserted that into the foreseeable future "only the US could provide the nuclear backbone for deterrence in Western Europe."

The proliferation of institutions on the European scene that appear to overlap the security function of NATO is at first worrisome. The EC, the EPC, the CSCE, the WEU, and NATO all attempt to provide effective channels and forums for resolving national interests. Considering the velocity of change in Europe over the past year, these diverse institutions may yield an effective way to approach solutions demanded by European economic and political union.

Because of the diversity of national interest amongst European nations, the answers provided by any one institution may not suffice to guarantee security or economic prosperity. In any event, the changing regional landscape suggests that we consider a restructured NATO. Some observers believe that the CSCE is the optimal organization to bridge the Cold War era and the emerging world order. There is strong evidence to support this since it currently is the only forum that handles not only European interests but those of the US and the USSR. A combination of the CSCE, EC, WEU, and a restructured NATO could provide a potential transitional architecture upon which to construct a truly European security mechanism.

The importance of the EC speaks for itself. Over 160 billion dollars was traded between the US and the EC in 1988. US corporate investment in the EC has leapt to over 176 billion dollars in 1989 and EC corporate holdings in the US went from 21 billion to 123 billion dollars in 1989. Additionally, almost two-thirds of all foreign direct investment from US manufacturing companies were made in the EC. With this kind of exchange and long term investment capital, the US interest and interdependence in Western Europe can only grow in the future and provide the US with another reason for staying heavily engaged in Europe.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is time for the US to develop a global, long range strategy to define at a minimum the strategic of US policy, especially in light of the changes occurring in the world. The strategic ideas, concepts, and experience are there -- we need only exploit them in developing an American grand strategy.

2. The US should support the development of a distinct European identity. We have supported this idea in theory since 1947 --the time is rapidly approaching where we will either be a part of the problem or a part of the solution. The independent emergence of a European security identity represents a success of our policy and serves our long term national interests.

3. With regard to nuclear weapons, the United States should remain at center stage. France and Great Britain's nuclear forces are too small, and Germany has signed a non-proliferation treaty as well as renouncing them in its constitution. From a stability and deterrence standpoint, this also appears to be in our long range interests. The Europeans recognize that only US nuclear power can provide a nuclear counterweight to the USSR.

4. The US should support a restructuring of NATO in accommodating European interests in this decade. At the same time NATO serves a critical role in the European transition to an independent security identity. It provides a key forum for European security issues, a key element of European stability, and can serve not only military functions but also political ones.

5. The US should seek a central leadership role in the CSCE -- what Secretary Baker called "the conscience of Europe". This is the only European security apparatus that brings all the key players together including the USSR.

6. The US should maintain and strengthen its already close ties with unified Germany. It is strategic "common sense" that in any of Europe's alternative futures -- Germany will play a central if not dominant role. Furthermore, this gives the US potential influence in the formation of European structures of which it is not a member.

